

INFANT BAPTISM,

AN IMPORTANT PART OF

XV

THE SYSTEM OF MEANS

1-2

Adopted by God for the Religious Instruction,

IN ORDER TO

THE SALVATION OF APOSTATE MEN,

AS TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE.

A SERMON,

Preached at Medway, August 25th, 1832

ON THE CHURCH AND CONGREGATION OF MEDWAY

FROM THEIR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR,

ROBERT QUARTERMAN

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SERMON.

Acts, 2 ch. 39 v.

“ For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all, that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

BELOVED BRETHREN:

IT is, as I believe, and as you all will doubtless acknowledge, a lamentable fact, that notwithstanding all that has been said and written on infant baptism, few, very few, among us do have such clear, consistent, and satisfactory views of this subject, as to set their minds entirely at rest on it, and to enable them with meekness and readiness to give to every one, that asketh them, a scriptural reason for their peculiar faith and practice on this particular point. Of this fact I am thoroughly convinced by my own observation. In private conversations with many of you from time to time on this subject, I have generally found, that whilst you are decidedly paedobaptists in sentiment, and esteem it both a blessed privilege, and a binding duty, to devote your children to God in baptism; yet, that your minds are not so thoroughly informed, and so perfectly clear, on this subject, as to free you from every doubt, and to enable you with the confidence of truth, to stand up boldly in defence of your peculiar sentiment, so often as it is assailed by those, who hold a different opinion. Now, this want of clear, scriptural views of this subject, which, if I mistake not, does too generally prevail, may, I think, be traced to two causes:

First. The, to me, truly astonishing silence, which, until within a few years past, has been rigidly maintained among us by both ministers and people on this subject. Formerly, as you all can testify, year after year rolled away, without any such instructions, either from the pulpit, or in the parlour, as were calculated to enlighten the minds of both parent and children, and make them intelligent paedobaptists.

All other subjects were successively taken up, explained, and enforced; but through a mistaken idea of preserving peace and unity with those of our brethren, who differ from us on this particular point, this subject has been suffered to lie almost entirely unnoticed. I say, through a *mistaken* idea of preserving peace and unity with those, who differ from us: for, as I believe, (and it is a belief, which is the *result* of long observation,) the *only terms* of unity with them is, an unreserved surrender of our own judgment in this matter to theirs. Nothing less than this, I am well convinced, will suffice to bring about real unity with them. If, then, this conviction is just, the idea of unity with them by a profound silence on our part, to the neglect and great detriment of our own people, was a *mistake*, a miserable *delusion*. And this is, doubtless, one cause, why so much darkness and uncertainty do now rest upon this subject in the minds of many.

Another cause, I think, is this; in all our discussions of this subject, in all our sermons, lectures, essays, &c. on baptism, the great fundamental principle, or leading topic, on which all the other arguments are based, and to which they are all united, has been too much taken for granted, as a matter universally seen, and well understood: and has, therefore, been merely incidentally and lightly touched, if touched at all. We have exhibited this subject to our people in this, that, and the other point of view: but we have rarely taken them to the *bottom*, and shewed them the foundation, if I may so express it, on which all these parts do rest, and on which they depend for their beauty, their excellence, and their truth; and thus enabled them to see at one view the great, grand, and perfect *whole* of divine operations for the salvation of apostate men, as revealed in the Bible. Unable of themselves, or too averse to labour, to investigate this subject to the bottom; to trace all the arguments to their common centre, their great corner-stone, our arguments have generally appeared to them, as, though good in themselves, yet, wanting in a clearly visible, sure, and firm foundation.

In looking at the subject of baptism, they have been met by so many difficulties in the scheme, which is believed and adopted by anti-paedobaptists, as have made them unwilling to embrace it. Nor has the scheme of paedobaptists been so clear and intelligible to them, as to enable them to adopt it, free from every embarrassing uncertainty: but they have chosen it, because, in their view, it presents fewer difficulties than the former. Now, it is certain, that a system

so imperfectly understood, must be exceedingly precarious in its tenure, and inefficient in its operations.

If, then, we have been thus delinquent both in ministerial and parental instructions on this subject; and if when we have given it a place in our discussions, we have not gone to the bottom, and thoroughly laid open the whole system, shewing the connection, not only of the several parts to each other, but also of all the parts to their common foundation; and thus, presented the whole in a plain, consistent manner—a manner easily understood by all, and in entire accordance with the whole scope of Bible revelations, what wonder is it, that many should not be clear, as to the soundness of this part of our creed? and should consequently be more or less unfaithful in the discharge of those duties, which they owe to their baptized children? or that they should be more easily persuaded by bold assertions, and insinuating importunity, to renounce a doctrine, which they never fully understood?

The evils, resulting to yourselves, your children, and the church, from such vague and indefinite views of duty on this subject, are incalculable. We see, and often lament some of these evils; but we neither know, nor consider, that they spring from this cause. An enlightened, clear, and full understanding of this doctrine, the doctrine of infant baptism, would do much towards the remedying of these evils. And I feel assured, that this doctrine is capable of being presented in a manner so plain, so perfectly scriptural, as to be easily understood by all, whose minds are not warped by prejudice; and to "commend itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God," as a plainly revealed Bible truth. How far I shall succeed in doing this to-day, I know not.

In order, then, to a clear and full exhibition of this subject, as it presents itself to my mind, I must take you back to the beginning; yea, before time began, or creative power was exerted in the formation of angels and men, and request you to look at the great God. Who, or what, is he! Open the book of nature—open the volume of inspiration, and what do they teach us concerning God? That he is the uncreated, self-existent, independent, infinitely wise, powerful, holy, just, and good God; the Creator, Governor, and Disposer of all things; the irresponsible, universal, and absolute Sovereign of all. Now, I hold, that a Being, possessing such a nature, such attributes, will not, *can not*, in any instance, act at random. If he acts at all, he must be governed in what he does by fixed laws, founded in his own

nature, and resulting from his own perfections. The object, whose accomplishment is purposed, must necessarily be a great and good one, an object, worthy of himself; and the means chosen for its accomplishment, must be such, as are best adapted to this end. *It must be so.* If he be the independent, Almighty God, then he *can do* whatsoever he pleases: if he be the omniscient God, possessing unbounded knowledge, then all possible things and events, together with the endlessly diversified means of bringing them into existence, are before his eyes, present to his all-comprehensive view; and if he be infinitely wise, holy, and good, *he can not but choose* to bring into existence such things, as are on the whole *best*, or as will be most for his glory, and the good of his universal Kingdom; nor *can he but choose* to do this, to bring into existence such things, in the *best* way, or by the *best* means.

Now, I wish this to be borne in mind by you, that God acts invariably according to rule; that in all his operations, he has before him a definite plan, comprehending both the object to be effected, and the means, by which it is to be effected; both which, the object, and the means, are the *best* the nature of the case will admit.

Let us now place our subject in the light of this truth, and see, whether it does not exactly correspond with that law, or rule, by which the great God is always governed in the exercise of his infinite attributes.

God, in the councils of his own mind, has seen good to bring into existence this world, with all things that are in it. Man, the intended lord and head of all, he formed after his own image in knowledge and holiness, and endued his nature with reason and immortality. Thus constituted, man was of course an accountable being; and as a test of his submission and devotion to his Maker, God was pleased to lay him under a certain restriction, and said to him, "Of all the trees in the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Man did eat; and therefore lost his moral likeness to God, and his title to life; and involved himself in guilt, depravity, and death. His children, born in his own true likeness of depravity, became equally obnoxious to the dreadful penalty, death: as says the Apostle—"Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

But God had thoughts of mercy towards apostate man, and his ruined progeny; and, therefore, as soon as he fell, God announced to him the abiding intelligence of redemption through a suitable Mediator, as "the seed of the woman." This was a part of God's original purpose. When he determined to form man, he at the same time, distinctly foreseeing his apostacy, determined to redeem and save him by the sacrifice of his own Son; and this, not only for the sake of the great amount of happiness, which it would bring into his Kingdom; but also, and more especially, that he might make a most glorious display of himself to the universe; that he might make a most solemn and affecting exhibition of his divine perfections to the view of the whole intelligent creation. And hence, Christ is sometimes spoken of as "the Lamb slain from, or before, the foundation of the world;" that is, he was slain in the purpose of the divine mind.

But simply effecting redemption for apostate men would not be enough. Christ, the Lamb of God might have shed his blood a sacrifice for sin; and God, the Father, for his sake, might have been willing to pardon, renew, and save men, on the terms of repentance and faith; but the natural ignorance and depravity of men, would always have opposed an insuperable bar to their salvation, without something more being done. And God has done more. He has sent to men the gospel, which reveals to them this great salvation in all its rich and ample provisions. He has given them an infallible standard of truth and duty, as their rule of faith and practice; assuring them of pardon, peace, and eternal life, if they obey; but of indignation and wrath, yea, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, if they disobey; and intermixing numerous warnings, exhortations and persuasions, to convince men of their guilt, and their need of a Saviour; and to determine them to renounce their sins, and accept of his gracious salvation. Nor would all this be enough. Men would live and die in sin, and go down at last to perdition, with the whole system of divine revelations in their houses, without some more effectual means to bring these heavenly truths and duties to bear directly upon their hearts and consciences. God's system of means must go farther. Other means still must be adopted, and put in operation, to bring men under the constant influence of these heart-purifying, soul-saving revelations. And in order to the *greatest efficiency* of this system, it must manifestly contain in it something, that will bring these di-

vine revelations to bear upon men, *even from their very birth.*

This is certainly a very important part of a system of means to bring men to the knowledge and experience of gospel truths and duties, in order to their salvation from sin and hell. All must see, and confess, that if children are suffered to grow up without being faithfully instructed in the great principles of revealed religion—without much pains taken to form their sentiments and practices according to bible instructions and rules, they will almost certainly imbibe notions, and form habits of sinning, which will make it far more difficult, in after life, to get them to feel the power of truth; and, therefore, far more probable, that they will live and die unsaved by the gospel.

Suppose a certain individual, possessing immense wealth, should form the design of generously devoting his wealth to the benevolent purpose of some great and extensive reformation, say, the sobering of a kingdom or empire, which was wholly given to intemperance, how would he proceed? He would, doubtless, in the first place, endeavour to enlighten their minds on this subject. He would procure, and scatter among them all the tracts, essays, addresses, &c. on temperance, that he could obtain. He would do more than this. He would employ suitable agents to go among them, and call up their minds frequently to this subject—to spread before them the evils of intemperance, and the manifold advantages of sobriety—to warn them of the dreadful consequences of obstinate perseverance in the use of ardent spirit, and to exhort and persuade them to renounce it; assuring them, not only that their happiness and prosperity would be greatly increased by sobriety; but also, that they should be made *heirs* to his large estate. He would farther require, that all who are willing to give up the use of ardent spirit, should associate themselves together by some public act, expressive of their determination entirely to abstain, by which they might be distinctly recognized and known as temperance men. And, if he be a wise man, he would go farther still. He would require, that all parents, heads of families, guardians, and the like, when they become parties in the temperance compact, should at the same time come under some visible pledge to use their utmost endeavours, both by example and precept, to make their households temperate—to train up their children to habits of sobriety.

If the views of the reformer go beyond the present generation—if he designs to carry on his benevolent operations

down through every succeeding generation, until the whole empire is reclaimed to sobriety; is it not evident, that the last mentioned item in his system of means is of *great importance*? If this were left out, is it not certain, that his system of operations would be greatly enfeebled? He would indeed bind such parents, as are parties in the compact, to be sober; but he would leave it entirely at their option, whether they will, or will not, faithfully labour to instil in the minds of their growing families, right views and sentiments on this subject.

Should any object to this, and say to him, that parents, who are so convinced of the impropriety and immorality of using ardent spirit as to come under a pledge to relinquish it themselves, would be *bound* by all the tender considerations suggested by the endearing relation of parent and child; by a natural regard to the health, reputation, prosperity, and usefulness of their children, to use their utmost endeavours to form them to habits of sobriety, without any particular pledge to do this, he would reply, I must take human nature as it is, not as it *should* be. When I look around me, I see, that all, even the best, are prone to lose their sense of moral obligation, and to neglect their duty. Allowing then, that parents would be *bound* thus to labour for the sobering of their families, without any special engagement to do this, yet, I am very sure they would not so *feel* their obligation without, as with it. And of what avail is obligation, if it be not *realized*? if it be not *felt*? In order to the highest success of my enterprise, children must be taught, even from their infancy, to regard all alcoholic drinks as poison to both body and soul; and that their only security from its deleterious effects is, entire abstinence. If they are allowed to acquire the taste in early life, and to grow up in the practice of drinking, I shall continue to have this pernicious *habit* to contend with; and ages must roll away, before I can reasonably hope to attain my end, the sobering of the whole empire. In order then, to the greatest efficiency of my system of means, it must contain in it something, that will in the highest degree secure the training up of families to sobriety, by solemnly impressing the minds of parents with a *sense* of their obligation to exert themselves for this purpose.

Now let us look at the great plan which God, who is far wiser than man, has adopted for the salvation of the world. What is his object? The moral reformation of all mankind: the conversion of the whole world: the turning of all men from sin to holiness—from the paths of transgression and folly, to the ways of wisdom, virtue, and godli-

ness. This is his object—an object too, worthy of himself. But what are the means which he has adopted for effecting this object? In addition to those already mentioned, the opening up for men, through the cross of Christ, a way for the pardon of their sins, the sanctification of their nature, and the eternal salvation of their souls; and the gift of his gospel, a plain and full revelation of his will, comprehending a complete system of truth and duty; he has hallowed, and set apart one day in seven for holy purposes; and requires all to "remember the sabbath day to keep it holy," not only by abstaining from all worldly avocations and pursuits, but also by calling up to their minds in a more fixed, undivided, and solemn manner, the great subjects of revelation, for their instruction, admonition, comfort, and encouragement. And in order to bring these great truths to bear upon *all*, he has ordained, and sent forth ministers to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to their fellow-men, when, in obedience to his command, they assemble together on his holy day. Those, who believe and obey the gospel, he requires to associate themselves together in an ecclesiastical compact, by publicly professing their faith in Christ, and entering into covenant with God, avouching him to be their God and portion, and engaging to be unto him an obedient people; that so they may enjoy the privileges of Christian communion and fellowship, and be trained up in comfort and holiness through faith unto salvation.

But do the means adopted by God for the instruction of men, in order to their conversion and salvation, end here? I answer, no. Although this system, as far as it goes, is excellent, yet it does not go far enough. It is manifestly incomplete. It does not comprehend *all the means*, necessary to the greatest efficiency of the general plan. If God had said, this is enough—I will go no farther; I should submissively bow to his decision. But instead of this, he has plainly taught us, that he does go farther: that he does embrace in his system of means for human salvation, the religious instruction of children: that he does require believing parents, not only to enter into his covenant themselves, by submitting to the outward sign, but also to devote their children to him, by placing upon them the same sign of the covenant; thereby engaging to use their utmost endeavours by example and precept to make them virtuous, pious, and holy children. And thus, this solemn transaction, whilst it introduces the child into a covenant relation with God, gives him a title to all the blessings of redemption, and ensures them to him, unless he foolishly chooses to sell this title for some earthly trash, a mess of pottage, and brings him under peculiar obligation to seek regenerating

grace, live a holy life, and thus in the end possess the promised inheritance, eternal life; does at the same time, and in a most powerful and affecting manner, impress the mind of the parent with a sense of his duty, to be faithful in performing his engagement. Thus the children of believers are introduced to God, and to religion, as soon as they are born; and their religious education, together with all the blessings connected with it, is made as sure as it can be, so far, at least, as human agency is concerned. And this, in connection with the aforementioned means, and together with the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, complete the system, and presents to our view a perfect plan of operations, combining both divine and human instrumentalities, for the instruction of men, in order to their becoming holy here, and in the end happy in heaven for ever. And, unless I am greatly mistaken, it is the very plan taught, and unfolded to us in the Bible.

That early religious instruction, or family religion, did occupy a very important place in God's system of means for human salvation under the former dispensation, none can doubt. This is evident and undeniable. From the beginning of the world down to the time of Abraham, this was almost the *only* means used for the enlightening and saving of men. From the calling of Abraham, when a Church, properly so called was formed, and a spiritual rite was ordained, as its distinctive outward badge, shewing them to be God's covenant people, down to the resurrection and ascension of our blessed Saviour, though the means of instruction and salvation were enlarged and systematized, yet still that part, which relates to family religion was retained, more clearly defined, and expressly enjoined. During the whole of this time, which was about four thousand years, it is *absolutely certain*, that the religious instruction of children did constitute a very important part of the divine plan for fitting souls for heaven. And for a considerable portion of this time, this, as a means, was expressly commanded; and so arranged and modelled, as to clothe it with far more importance and solemnity; and, therefore, to make it far more affecting and impressive, in order to its greater efficiency as a means of salvation. I need not enlarge here, as I shall have occasion to notice this subject hereafter. Nor should I have introduced it to your notice at all at this time, but that I might bring to your view the fact, that early religious instruction, first, in pious households, and afterwards in families, who were members of the Jewish Church, being in covenant with God, and this by his own appointment, was a part, and a very important part too, of God's great plan of saving sinners.

Let us now come down to the New Testament dispensation, and see, whether the great Law-Giver and Head of the Church, has said or done any thing to set aside this hitherto important part of the divinely appointed system of means. It is not even pretended by any, so far as I know, that either Christ, or his Apostles, have said any thing expressly prohibiting the continued use of this part of the appointed means. But we are perpetually asked, to produce some positive precept in the New Testament, *requiring* us to introduce our children into a covenant relation to God. But no such precept was necessary; and, therefore, none was given. God had already legislated on this subject: that law had not been repealed; and was, therefore, still obligatory. And that it was regarded as still binding by both Christ and his Apostles, is evident, to me at least, from the whole tenor of the New Testament. Allowing that they did acknowledge the existence and binding obligation of the law, originally given to Abraham, requiring the children of believing parents to be brought into covenant relation to God by a religious rite, they have said just such things, and only such things, as they might have been expected to say, on this subject.

Our Lord said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." To the convicted Jews, on the day of Pentecost, who anxiously inquired, "What shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And, as an encouragement to do this, he adds in our text, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

The promise, of which the Apostle here spake, must have been the promise made by God to Abraham, when he said, "I am the Almighty God: walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

Here, God proposed to Abraham an everlasting covenant, in the form of a law or command; in which he solemnly engaged, on his part, to be a God unto him, and to his seed after him: which promise does evidently include rich and ample blessings, both temporal and spiritual; not merely a numerous progeny, and the land of Canaan, as is said by some; but, as is plainly implied in the very words of the covenant, and afterwards more fully expressed in subsequent revelations, all spiritual blessings and privileges,

such as the oracles of God, or the Holy Scriptures, the ministry of holy prophets and priests, and the administration of divine ordinances, in order to their conversion from sin, and salvation in heaven. And on the part of Abraham, he, together with his children, was required to walk before God, and be perfect; which evidently means, that he and they should habitually cherish a sense of their dependence upon God, and of their obligation, as his covenant people, to seek his favour and blessing, by lives entirely conformed to his revealed will. And as a seal of this covenant, or an outward sign of this promise of God to them, and of their peculiar obligation to him, to be an obedient, holy people; God gave to Abraham the rite of circumcision, saying, "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee, every man child among you shall be circumcised. And he that is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. And it shall be a *token* of the covenant betwixt me and you."

Now, I wish you here to notice particularly this solemn transaction. Hitherto the knowledge and worship of the true God, and indeed all the means of salvation, had been perpetuated merely by tradition, by being transmitted from parent to child; a method this, too loose and precarious, to render these means extensively efficacious and saving. To remedy this evil, and give greater efficiency to these means, God enlarges, and reduces them to a regular system, which in substance he designed to continue to the end of time. He comes to Abraham, proclaims himself the Almighty God, able to defend, save, and bless, even to the utmost, and commands him to persevere in that holy, believing temper and practice, which he had hitherto exhibited. He then makes known to him his covenant, solemnly promising to be *his* God, and the God of *his children* after him; and requires him to enter into it; thereby avouching the Lord to be his God and portion, and engaging to live a life of faith and obedience to him. And that this relation might become visible—that all might see and know, and he himself might *feel*, that he was in covenant with God as a believer, the Lord appointed a religious rite, as the token or outward sign of this covenant, and directed him, without delay, to assume this sign by submitting to this rite. And to complete this divine arrangement, and make it a perfect system of means for the salvation of men, God directed believing Abraham to bring his children, even at eight days old, into an eternal relation to him, by impressing them with the sign or token of the covenant; thereby making them heirs of all the blessings comprehended in the foregoing promise.

In this solemn transaction, then, the right, by divine appointment, of introducing children into covenant with God, by applying to them the sign of the covenant, and thereby making them heirs of all the blessings contained in the promise, is distinctly and plainly taught; and sheds such light upon the remark of the Apostle in the text, as makes it perfectly intelligible, yea, peculiarly pertinent and forcible. To your anxious inquiry, "What shall we do?" I answer, says the Apostle, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is to *you*, and to your *children, specially*, who are God's covenant people; and to all others, however far off, whom God shall call by the gospel into a covenant relation to himself. If this was not the Apostle's meaning, I confess, I can discover neither force nor sense in his words, for the promise is unto *you*, and to your *children*. If the promise, of which he spake, was the general promise of pardon to penitent sinners, he would certainly have used some such general language as this, for God does promise to pardon all, who repent and obey the gospel. There must evidently have been something peculiar to the Jews and their children, to induce the Apostle to particularize *them*, as persons to whom the promise was *specially* applicable; and this must have been their relation to God, as his covenant people. In the judgment of Peter, then, children were still within the covenant, and heirs of the promise.

We read of several instances of household baptism, in which it is reasonable to believe there were children, who were taken into covenant with God, along with their believing parents.

Paul said to the awakened jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; *and thy house.*" The last clause, I think, would not have been added by an anti-pædobaptist.

And to the Corinthians, who desired to know, whether a husband or a wife, on being converted to Christianity, whilst the other party remained an Infidel, should separate from the unbeliever, the Apostle answered, no; "for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children *unclean*;" that is, according to the sense in which this word was universally understood by the Jews, unfit to be offered to God; "but now are they *holy*;" that is, relatively so, fit to be devoted to God.

Now, I ask, considering that children had long before, and down to that very time, been taken into covenant with God by an express law, which had not been repealed, as a

part of his merciful plan for the instruction and salvation of sinful men, do not these things, mentioned incidentally, without any particular reference to the main subject, (for that is every where taken for granted,) prove almost to demonstration, that the same entire plan in substance, though changed in its outward form, is continued under the present or Christian dispensation?

But we are asked to *prove*, that baptism now, does take the place of circumcision under the former dispensation, as a sign or token of the covenant.

This, I think, is clearly proved, by their sameness in their origin, their nature, and their design, as well as by apostolical authority. They are both divinely appointed rites: This none will deny. They are both religious, spiritual rites. That baptism is such all will confess. And that circumcision was such, is abundantly taught in the Scriptures. The Apostle says, "He is not a Jew, who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, *in the spirit*, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." And they are both designed to reprent the entire pollution of the natural heart, and its cleansing or purification by the spiritual application of the blood of Jesus Christ. Circumcision looked forward, baptism looks back to the great atonement made for sin by the shedding of Christ's blood upon the cross, as the only ground of the sinner's justification and salvation. Circumcision, *we know*, was formerly the token of the covenant: if, then, the covenant still exists—if God is still the covenant God of his people, this covenant must still have a sign or token, and this sign must be baptism.

And this is plainly expressed by the Apostle to the Colossians; who, it seems, had been taught by Jewish teachers, that it was necessary to be circumcised, and to keep the law of Moses. To them, the Apostle says, "Ye are complete in him; (Christ,) in whom also *ye are circumcised* with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, *by the circumcision of Christ*, buried with him in baptism," &c. As if he had said, in baptism, which is the circumcision of Christ, or the Christian circumcision, you do realize all, that were formerly realized in the ordinance of circumcision: it is symbolical of the same inward change of heart, and involves the same blessings, privileges, and duties, which were signified and comprehended in circumcision. Possessing, then, in your baptism, all that were contained in circumcision, it is not necessary that you should be circumcised.

Is it not evident, then, beyond a reasonable doubt, that baptism now does take the place of circumcision as the outward sign of the covenant? and that the same entire plan for the salvation of men, which God *had* pursued for ages, he does *still* pursue, and *will* pursue to the end of time? And is not infant baptism, then, an important part of the system of means adopted by God for the instruction, in order to the salvation of apostate men, as taught in the Bible? —What objection is there, which has been, or can be, urged against infant baptism, that may not, with equal propriety and force, be urged against infant circumcision? And yet we *know*, that infant circumcision was expressly commanded by God, as a part of his gracious plan for fitting souls for heaven.

This, Brethren, is, so to speak, the *foundation* to which all the other arguments, that you have at any time heard, are exactly fitted, and on which they are all based. Viewed in this light, as being a part of the divinely appointed system of means for human salvation, infant baptism is an intelligible, wise, benevolent, and plainly revealed, Bible doctrine—a doctrine, which gives *oneness* to the great plan of divine operations, from the beginning to the end of time, and which makes the Bible one uniform, consistent, and entire developement of that plan. Admit this doctrine, and you stamp value and importance on the Old Testament, as the infallible oracles of God; by which we may see what God has been doing from the beginning of the world, age after age more and more clearly unfolding his infinitely wise and merciful plan for saving sinners, until completely developed by the Gospel of Christ. Admit this doctrine, and you behold a system of operations *absolutely complete*; comprehending in it every thing necessary to the highest success of God's great design of saving sinful men. Deny this doctrine, and you mutilate and greatly enfeeble this system of divine operations; and you convert the Old Testament into little else than a mere history of the Jewish nation, among whom the Saviour was to be born. Deny this doctrine, and you spread over four thousand years the darkness of spiritual night; in vain will your minds labour to discover some great and wise plan of divine operations for human salvation, which is worthy of God.

Yes, Brethren, this is Bible doctrine. And on this doctrine, I do believe, depend, under God, the very *existence and perpetuity of the Church*. Look at the tendency of this doctrine. It takes hold of children as soon as they are born, and puts them in a course of Bible-training for heaven; and at the same time, brings to bear upon the parents motives as

solemn as eternity, to be faithful in educating their children for God, and for heaven. Can you conceive of means, viewed in connection with the others, so well calculated to effect the great object, the conversion of the *world*?

Is it said, that anti-pædobaptists are under the same obligation to give their children religious instruction, that we are? I answer, do they *feel* that obligation? Do they *do it*? I believe, and upon good grounds too, that this obligation is but *little* felt, and this duty but *very partially* performed, unless it be through the influence of pædobaptist example.

What is the tendency of their doctrine? What is there in it to wake up, and keep alive, this sense of obligation? what to rouse them to diligent and untiring labour for the salvation of their children? Nothing, that I can see, save the affectionate feelings of a pious heart. God does indeed command them, as well as others, to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But even this command does not generally ensure a faithful discharge of this duty, unless it be through the force of pædobaptist influence. If you would judge correctly of the real tendency of their doctrine, look; not at those churches which come within the sphere of pædobaptist influence; but of those, where the influence of our doctrine is neither seen nor felt: and, I am greatly deceived, if you do not find a lamentable inattention to the religious instruction of children. Those churches, which come within the range of influence exerted by our doctrine, will of course be excited to more or less diligence in the discharge of this duty. Perhaps their parents were pædobaptists: they have, therefore, all the force of early religious education bearing still upon their own minds, to excite them to this duty. Or at any rate, their neighbours are zealously labouring to train up their children for God; and for shame they will not wholly neglect it. But whilst our example does exert a salutary influence upon them, their example, in return, gives back to us a relaxing influence. There is not in their doctrine that, which is calculated in the *highest degree* to effect, and move them to the faithful performance of this duty. They need something to bring *home* this obligation with *power*, some *sensible signs*, which will remind them of their duty—some *personal act*, in the form of a religious rite, to call up their sense of obligation, wake up conscience, and set them to work. God knew that this was necessary, for he knew perfectly what is in man, and has, therefore, appointed a rite for these very purposes. But the evil tendency of their doctrine stops not here. It goes

to the abrogation of the Sabbath. Nothing, say they, in law, except what is found in the New Testament. But where do we find the law, requiring the keeping holy of a seventh-day Sabbath? Not in the *New*, but in the *Old* Testament. Now abolish the Sabbath—break up our sabbatical assemblies—suppress the weekly exhibitions of Gospel truths, and what would become of the Church?

If we pass from the tendency of this their doctrine to its foundation, on what is it based? Merely on the particular rendering of a few prepositions in our English version; such as, they went down *into* the water, and came up *out of* the water:—the order of words in some particular sentences; such as, he that *believeth*, and is *baptized*, shall be saved; *repent* and be *baptized*:—and the mere sound of words, such as, *buried* with Christ in baptism. Survey now the foundation on which this doctrine rests. The Greek prepositions, here translated *into* and *out of*, do mean, and are far more frequently rendered, even in the New Testament, *to*, and *from*, than *into*, and *out of*. Is it not certain, that the phrase, he that believeth and is baptized, has reference to the *fact* of being baptized, and not to the pointing out the necessity, that faith should precede baptism? He that believeth, and is *baptized*, no matter when, whether in infancy, or in youth, or an hour ago, if he believes, and it is a *fact* that he is baptized, he shall be saved. And as to the other phrase, *repent*, and be *baptized*, this was addressed to an immense multitude of awakened *adults* at the very *opening* of the Christian dispensation, when baptism, as the token of the covenant, was to go into operation as a substitute for circumcision. The command for Christian baptism was given by our Lord just before his ascension into Heaven; and up to that moment, circumcision was the outward sign of God's covenant people. And the first practical exhibition of Christian baptism, was on the day of Pentecost. Before this time, none, that we know of, was admitted into covenant with God by this new rite. Of course Peter, in directing the convicted Jews what to do, would very naturally say, *repent*, and be *baptized*. It is a great *mistake* to suppose, that John's baptism was Christian baptism. They are totally distinct from each other. The institution of Christian baptism was, as I said just now, almost the very last words which our Saviour uttered before his ascension into Heaven; and of course, could not have been in existence before. Besides, the formula used by John, was entirely different from that used in Christian baptism. John did not baptize in the name of the Trinity, as is evident from Acts 19 ch. 1-7, verses inclusive. All re-

ferences, then, to John's baptism for determining either the proper subjects, or mode of Christian baptism, are improper and inadmissible. And as to the expression, buried with Christ in baptism, the plain and obvious allusion of the Apostle is, to a death and burial *from sin*, and not under water.

How exceedingly slender is this foundation, on which to build a doctrine, involving such infinitely important consequences? Judge, then, yourselves, my Brethren, can a doctrine, which rests upon so *feeble a foundation*, and which is partially at least, of such *pernicious tendency* to the interests of the Church, be from God?

These remarks are prompted purely by a love for truth. I speak not of any particular Church, or class of persons, but of the *tendency* and *foundation* of anti-pædobaptist *doctrine*; and if I have erred by misrepresenting, or too highly colouring either, my error has been involuntary. It is, however, my settled conviction, that the faith and practice of pædobaptists do constitute that only *sure* and *stable* foundation, on which the Church of Christ is to rise to all that amplitude and glory, which holy men of God ages ago, wrapped in prophetic vision, have so sweetly sung.

Brethren, see, and understand, then, your duty; *feel* your obligation, and begin from this hour, to labour more diligently and earnestly for the salvation of your baptized children. Remember, that they are in an important sense *God's children*; that, as the seed of God's believing, covenant people whom you, in obedience to his command, have brought within the covenant by impressing them with the token, he claims them as peculiarly *his*; and that, having consecrated them to God, he has recommitted them to you, their parents, and natural guardians, to be trained up for him; whilst you, by that act, have solemnly engaged to use your utmost endeavours to make them virtuous, pious, and godly children. Remember, that as to *you chiefly* their religious education is entrusted; on *you principally*, so far as human instrumentality is concerned, depend their moral character and condition, both in this world, and in that which is to come. If you neglect your duty, and suffer them to grow up unrestrained, uninstructed, and unimpressed with a sense of their obligation to God, you need not be surprised, if they should despise their glorious birthright—sell it for worldly wealth, honour, or pleasure—wander far from their heavenly Father's house—pursue the ways of sin and folly—and, at last, end their mortal course in Hell. As, then, you love your children, your own dear offspring, who are bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh; as you

desire their honour and happiness both here and hereafter. I entreat you, wake up to your duty. Teach them betimes to know and fear the Lord their God. Teach them the peculiar relation they sustain to him, as his covenant children; and, consequently, their peculiar obligation to know, love and obey him, their covenant God. Instruct them, diligently, faithfully, perseveringly, in all the great and essential doctrines and precepts of divine revelation. Be careful to enforce, and seal upon their hearts, these instructions by a pious, godly example. Never let them see, in either your temper or practice, the least contradiction between the principles which you inculcate on them, and those, which habitually govern and actuate you. And daily, and constantly bear them in the arms of believing, earnest, importunate prayer, to their covenant God, for his blessing upon them—for the renewing and sanctifying energy of his Holy Spirit—and for his fatherly protection, guidance, and Almighty care of them.

If you are faithful—if you are diligent, wise, prudent, untiring in the discharge of your duty towards them, you may most certainly and reasonably hope, that they will be saved: for the promise of the faithful, covenant-keeping God, “I will be a God unto thee, and to thy *seed* after thee,” is to *you* and to your *children*. Shrink not, then, from the responsibility—fear not the labour which it will cost you, as there is reason to fear some do; but resolve in the strength, and by the grace of God, to come up to your engagements to discharge faithfully and fully your duty, *assured* that your labour will not be in vain in the Lord. Henceforth, let the baptism of your children be no more merely an empty form—an unmeaning, unprofitable ceremony; but let it be regarded by you as a solemn religious rite, enjoined by God as a wise and benevolent part of his great plan for the salvation of apostate men. Regard and prize it as a privilege—feel it as a *duty* to consecrate to God, not only *yourselves*, but *all that you have*, and *especially your children*; who, like yourselves, are immortal beings, and candidates for the rewards of an eternal world.

Listen, not for a moment, to any suggestion that would lead you to neglect the duty of baptizing your children, and thereby jeopard the interests of their undying souls, by lessening or destroying your sense of obligation to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And may the Lord, Jehovah, bless you and your children, and save you all in his heavenly kingdom; and to his great name shall be all the praise, through Jesus Christ, our only and all-sufficient Saviour, for ever and ever. Amen.



